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Director of Central Intelligence

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National Intelligence Daily

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ARGENTINA: Reconstituted Junta

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The reconstitution of the junta this week is unlikely to make Argentine policy more coherent and may weaken President Bignone's position.

Comment: The return of the Navy and Air Force commanders to the junta ended the rupture that followed the Army's selection in July of General Bignone as President. The recent shakeup in the Navy and Air Force that led to new commanders for the two services helped pave the way for the junta's reunification.

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The reconstitution of the junta probably will enable the military to limit Bignone's freedom of action. The Navy and Air Force fought his selection, and strongly nationalistic elements in each service are likely to oppose him on trying to take IMF-mandated austerity measures and on other economic and political issues. Meanwhile, inflation--running at an annual rate of 600 percent for the last two months--is causing labor unrest that plotters could exploit.

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Army Commander Nicolaides hopes to dump Bignone and take over the presidency himself.

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Nicolaides' supporters may be attempting to make the regime appear unstable in order to justify Bignone's removal.

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Nicolaides may be constrained from moving against Bignone in the near term because his position in the Army is not yet secure. He or other plotters are likely to prefer to wait until the outcome of promotion and retirement cycles next month before completing their plans. They probably calculate that the almost inevitable further deterioration in economic conditions and rising social discontent would gradually increase Bignone's vulnerability and the possibility of serious coup plotting.

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